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**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

Please amend the claims as follows. This listing of claims will replace all prior listings.

1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method of controlling an HVAC system comprising the steps of:

- (1) detecting inferring whether a stage of an HVAC component is a failed stage; and
- (2) removing the failed stage detected in said step (1) from a staging sequence.

2. (ORIGINAL) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein said step (1) further comprises the step of:

communicating a health status of the HVAC component to a controller.

3. (ORIGINAL) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein said step (1) further comprises the step of:

determining whether a communication link exists between the HVAC component and a controller.

4. (ORIGINAL) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein said step (1) further comprises the step of:

communicating a temperature of a controlled area to a controller.

5. (ORIGINAL) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein said step (1) further comprises the step of:

- (a) monitoring a temperature of a controlled area;
- (b) inferring whether the stage has failed from a relationship between the temperature of the controlled area and a time period.

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6. (ORIGINAL) A method as recited in claim 5, wherein said step (b) further comprises the step of:

(a) monitoring a slope of the relationship between the temperature of the controlled area and the time period.

7. (ORIGINAL) A method as recited in claim 5, wherein said step (b) further comprises the step of:

(a) monitoring a rate of change of a relationship between the temperature of the controlled area and the time period.

8. (ORIGINAL) A method as recited in claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

(a) periodically attempting communication with the failed stage;

(b) identifying whether the failed stage has become functional; and

(c) returning the failed stage to the staging sequence in response to said step (b).

9. (ORIGINAL) A method as recited in claim 8, wherein said step (b) further comprising the step of:

(i) identifying a positive communication with the failed stage.

10. (ORIGINAL) A method of controlling an HVAC system comprising the steps of:

(1) monitoring a rate of change of a relationship between a temperature of a controlled area and a time period for a first stage of an HVAC component;

(2) determining whether the first stage is a failed stage in response to said step (1); and

(3) removing the failed stage determined in said step (2) from a staging sequence.

11. (ORIGINAL) A method as recited in claim 10, wherein said step (1) further comprises the step of:

determining whether the rate of change is greater than a prior rate of change of a prior stage of the HVAC component.

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12. (ORIGINAL) A method as recited in claim 10, wherein said step (1) further comprises the step of:

comparing the rate of change to a stored rate of change for the first stage.

13. (ORIGINAL) A method as recited in claim 12, further comprises the step of:  
inputting the stored rate of change into a controller which communicates with the HVAC component.

14. (ORIGINAL) A method as recited in claim 12, further comprises the step of:  
learning the stored rate of change over a multiple of cycles of the first stage.

15. (ORIGINAL) A method as recited in claim 14, further comprises the step of:  
determining a configuration of the HVAC component in response to learning the stored rate of change of a multiple of stages comprising the first stage.

16. (ORIGINAL) A method as recited in claim 14, further comprises the step of:  
incorporating a gain into a control algorithm for the first stage in response to the stored rate of change to obtain a desired rate of change.

17. (ORIGINAL) A method as recited in claim 14, further comprises the step of:  
relating a recovery time period to the stored rate of change to achieve a designated temperature at a desired time.

18. (ORIGINAL) A method of controlling an HVAC system comprising the steps of:  
(1) monitoring a first rate of change of a first relationship between a temperature of a controlled area and a first time period for a first stage of an HVAC component;  
(2) monitoring a second rate of change of a second relationship between the temperature of the controlled area and a second time period for a second stage of the HVAC component;

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- (3) determining whether the second stage is a failed stage in response to said steps (1) and (2); and
- (4) removing the failed stage determined in said step (3) from a staging sequence.

19. (ORIGINAL) A method as recited in claim 18, further comprises the step of: determining a configuration of the HVAC component in response to said steps (1) and (2).

20. (ORIGINAL) A method as recited in claim 18, wherein said step (3) further comprises the step of:

determining if the second rate of change is less than the first rate of change; and  
determining that the second stage is a failed stage.

21 (NEW) A method of controlling an HVAC system comprising the steps of:  
(1) inferring whether a stage of an HVAC component is a failed stage from a relationship between the temperature of the controlled area and a time period; and  
(2) removing the failed stage detected in said step (1) from a staging sequence.